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IN SEARCH  
OF  
ANCIENT  
ROOTS



THE CHRISTIAN PAST  
*and the* EVANGELICAL  
IDENTITY CRISIS



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## Only a Latecomer in Christian History?

*The Evangelical Identity Crisis*



“BIBLE ANSWER MAN’ CONVERTS TO ORTHODOXY” read the startling headline of *Christianity Today*’s April 2017 story.<sup>1</sup> The center of the story’s attention, Hank Hanegraaff, had been a highly influential evangelical apologist and cult-watcher since 1989. Hanegraaff is the author of many books and a popular radio broadcaster; the periodical *Christian Research Journal*, published by the broadcast’s parent organization, the Christian Research Institute, has a wide following. In the days following the news of Hanegraaff’s realignment with Orthodoxy, reactions were swift and frequently critical.<sup>2</sup>

As well, I have taken up an interesting devotional book, *The Daily Office*.<sup>3</sup> It was not quite what it seemed. I was intrigued to find that this guide to

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<sup>1</sup>Sarah Eekhof Zylstra, “Bible Answer Man’ Converts to Orthodoxy,” *Christianity Today*, April 12, 2017, [www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2017/april/bible-answer-man-hank-hanegraaff-orthodoxy-cri-watchman-nee.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2017/april/bible-answer-man-hank-hanegraaff-orthodoxy-cri-watchman-nee.html).

<sup>2</sup>Art Moore, “Bible Answer Man’ Converts to Eastern Orthodoxy,” *World Net Daily*, April 13, 2017, [www.wnd.com/2017/04/bible-answer-man-converts-to-greek-orthodox-church](http://www.wnd.com/2017/04/bible-answer-man-converts-to-greek-orthodox-church).

<sup>3</sup>Peter Scazzaro, *The Daily Office: Remembering God’s Presence Throughout the Day* (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Association, 2008).

disciplined prayer, issued in association with the Willow Creek Association of Barrington, Illinois, attempts to use the cycle of daily prayer as set out in the ancient monastic Rule of St. Benedict (ca. 480–547) as a guide for modern believers. Paradoxically, the publisher—the Willow Creek Association—has come to be identified among evangelical Christians as a kind of epitome of “big box” generic Christianity that has sought to shun tradition in the attempt to reach the unchurched with the gospel. So, Willow Creek now keeps company with St. Benedict?

I am certain that readers who are now taking up *In Search of Ancient Roots* can relate similar observations. On the one hand, we can see men and women shaking the dust off their feet (so to speak) and exiting evangelical Christianity for something Roman or Eastern; on the other hand, there is the smorgasbord-style sampling of a little bit of this and a little bit of that from beyond evangelical Christianity. There is, to say the least, an unsettledness with things as they are.

Though vignettes like this are far from being the whole story (by book’s end, we will see that the flow *into* evangelical Christianity exceeds the trickle of those leaving), let’s be frank. In recent times, it has grown fashionable for a fair number who were reared in evangelical churches or are indebted to evangelical movements to express the sentiment that, like the proverbial mist, evangelical Christianity will soon evaporate. We hear of “post-evangelicals” as well as “ex-evangelicals.”<sup>4</sup> Now these terms by themselves do not indicate that the individuals employing them have left the Christian faith, but they do mean that they have distanced themselves from the evangelical movement—a global network linking together churches and believers. Evangelicals seek to uphold a scriptural Christianity emphasizing that salvation is appropriated by a personal faith in Christ, is demonstrated in subsequent holy living, and supports world evangelization.

Of course, no one is obliged to be included in this movement against their wishes. But in our time, people are leaving evangelical Christianity for a relatively new reason: their conclusion is that—in the big picture of things—

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<sup>4</sup>See, for example, the 1995 work of Dave Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical* (London: Triangle; American rev. ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) and the rejoinder volume it generated, Graham Cray et al., eds., *The Post-Evangelical Debate* (London: Triangle, 1997). A contemporary example of the ex-evangelical genre is Christian Smith’s *How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic in Ninety-Five Difficult Steps* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).

this movement is an upstart and a latecomer. The Christian tradition has survived without evangelical Christianity during most of its existence (so goes this argument); why should not the Christian tradition survive without it now? From this perspective, evangelical Christianity was either merely the descendant of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century or a child of the modern period, especially the Enlightenment era. With these eras of world history now well behind us and exerting a diminished influence, evangelical Christianity has, on this understanding, been orphaned; it is now only a kind of flotsam and jetsam left from an earlier time. Despite whatever dominance it may admittedly have exerted in past centuries, it will (on this view) steadily surrender its place to some other expression of Christianity. What that “other” expression of Christianity might be varies with the one leaving the cause.

For some, that other expression of Christianity is found in Roman Catholicism or one of the expressions of Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>5</sup> Such communions as the Roman Catholic and Orthodox are transnational; they exemplify the *opposite* of a kind of provincialism displayed within portions of the evangelical world. And they are also expressions of Christianity that are pre-Enlightenment.

Yet there are at the same time those who—responding to the influences of postmodernity—want to find an expression of Christianity that is *less* tethered to the past, *less* focused on transmitted dogma, and more socially conscious. These say farewell to certain forms of evangelical Christianity, not (like those already described) because of evangelical Christianity’s perceived tenuous connection with the Christian past but because its “best before” date has arrived. As one who wrote in support of saying such farewells to evangelical Protestantism put it, each five-hundred-year period of

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<sup>5</sup>This body of literature is extensive and growing. Among the narratives consulted here, published by those leaving evangelical Protestantism for Roman Catholicism, are Tom Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984); Scott and Kimberley Hahn, *Rome Sweet Home* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993); and Smith, *How to Go from Being*. Similar literature authored by those leaving evangelical Protestantism for forms of Eastern Orthodoxy includes Peter Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox*, rev. ed. (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1992); Charles Bell, *Discovering the Rich Heritage of Orthodoxy* (Minneapolis: Light and Life, 1994); Michael Harper, *The True Light: An Evangelical’s Journey to Orthodoxy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997); and Frank Schaeffer, *Dancing Alone: The Quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religion* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross, 1994).

Christian history requires a “rummage sale” in order to be “reconfigured” for the next phase of Christianity; that “sale” and “reconfiguration” are under way right now.<sup>6</sup>

## LEAVING EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY MEANS LOSING WHAT?

Now, if a person leaves the evangelical movement for one alternative or the other, what is it that is left behind? The person departing from this stream of Christianity for Roman Catholicism or Orthodoxy is convinced that he or she is leaving a movement that is frivolous and “lite” and embracing instead another that, because it is rooted in Christian antiquity, is substantive. The one leaving this expression of the faith for an emergent, postmodern expression of Christianity believes that he or she is jettisoning a stream that is compromised by an undue stress on the rational defense of Christian dogma and on the importance of numerical indicators of success. Such seekers believe they are gaining a movement characterized by community, consensus building, and room for mystery.

But are these views of gains and losses rooted in a sober assessment of things? We can admit that evangelical Christianity is *not* monochromatic; some forms of it are very “lite,” and numerous expressions of it *do* have features that are off-putting and even extreme. Even so, such ways of calculating the reasons for which evangelical Christianity deserves to be jettisoned are problematic for at least two reasons.

First, those departing (especially from sectarian expressions of evangelical Christianity) are very prone to attribute the perceived defects of their own somewhat raw and imbalanced evangelical past to the whole of the evangelical movement. It does not necessarily follow that the emotional outbursts, speculation about end times, or legalistic tendencies that some who depart lament about *their* backgrounds were ever universal evangelical traits. Yet such extrapolation is widespread among disconcerted evangelicals who are eyeing the exits. Second, such approaches about the poverty

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<sup>6</sup>Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 26-27. See also Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). An insightful volume named above, Dave Tomlinson's *The Post-Evangelical*, should be thought of as belonging to this same genre; it seeks to accommodate Christianity to the postmodern situation.

of evangelical Christianity entail the embracing of an estimate of evangelical Christianity's origins, habits of thought, and expanse that is at odds with this movement's self-understanding. The evangelical movement does *not*, in fact, conceive of itself as utterly cut off from Christian antiquity; nor does it understand itself to be merely a child of the Enlightenment. The person contemplating abandoning evangelical Christianity should therefore be more careful to weigh this movement according to its actual self-understanding rather than one that is only surmised.

But having insisted on this, it is only proper to acknowledge that evangelical Christianity has more than one way of viewing its own origin and expanse. There are three identifiable perspectives on this.

***A time-honored view of evangelical origins.*** Since the Reformation era, there has been a widely accepted opinion within evangelical Protestantism that entails viewing the movement as the continuation of an earnest Christianity characterized by strong loyalty to Christ, submission to the central authority of the Bible, and the necessity of a living, personal faith, extending far back in the Christian centuries. One finds the conception expressed by Protestants as long ago as 1546, the year in which Martin Luther died. His colleague, Philip Melanchthon, eulogized him by linking him with "greats" from many preceding centuries:

After the apostles comes a long line, inferior, indeed, but distinguished by the divine attestations: Polycarp, Irenaeus, Gregory of Neocaesarea, Basil, Augustin, Prosper, Maximus, Hugo, Bernard, Tauler and others. And though these later times have been less fitful, yet God has always preserved a remnant; and that a more splendid light of the gospel has been kindled by the voice of Luther cannot be denied.<sup>7</sup>

The English chronicler and contemporary of Melanchthon, John Foxe (1516–1587), had the same objective in mind when he gathered martyr stories from all the preceding Christian centuries up to and including his own in the multivolume *Acts and Monuments* (1559).<sup>8</sup> In the eighteenth century, John Wesley (1703–1791) encouraged the early Methodists to think

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<sup>7</sup>Philip Melanchthon, "Funeral Oration over Luther" (1546), reprinted in Lewis W. Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation: Major Documents* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1997), 70.

<sup>8</sup>The 1559 edition of *Acts and Monuments* was published in Latin. An expanded version in English followed in 1563. Modern readers rely on the eight-volume Victorian edition, often reprinted.

in such terms by incorporating material from second-century Christianity as well as extensive excerpts from Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* in his multi-volume series *The Christian Library*.<sup>9</sup> This perspective—which viewed evangelical Protestantism as standing in clear continuity with vigorous scriptural Christianity of earlier ages—was still alive and well in the second half of the twentieth century and received clear articulation by well-known evangelical leaders such as John Stott (1921–2011), who wrote in 1970,

One would even dare to say that, properly understood, the Christian faith, the catholic faith, the biblical faith and the evangelical faith are one and the same thing. . . . If evangelical theology is biblical theology, it follows that it is not a new-fangled “ism,” a modern brand of Christianity, but an ancient form, indeed the original one. It is New Testament Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

J. I. Packer, whose career largely paralleled Stott's, wrote that evangelical Christianity is

the Christianity, both convictional and behavioral, which we inherit from the New Testament via the Reformers, the Puritans, and the revival and missionary leaders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. . . . The reason why I call myself an evangelical and mean to go on doing so is my belief that as this historic evangelicalism has never sought to be anything other than New Testament Christianity, so in essentials it has succeeded in its aim.<sup>11</sup>

One could readily find this essential viewpoint, stressing evangelical Christianity's longevity, being articulated in the mid-1990s. Alister McGrath

<sup>9</sup>Wesley's series, *The Christian Library*, was originally published in fifty volumes commencing in 1750. An improved edition of 1821 appeared in thirty volumes, and of these, the first four were concerned with ancient Christianity and a condensed treatment of Foxe's martyrology. I am indebted for these details to Northwest Nazarene University, accessed August 29, 2012, available at [wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-christian-library/](http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-christian-library/).

<sup>10</sup>John Stott, *Christ the Controversialist: A Study in Some Aspects of Evangelical Religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 33. Stott was still sounding this note in his *Evangelical Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). Non-Anglican evangelical writers had also argued the same case for Evangelicalism's doctrinal continuity with strands of earlier Christianity. See, for example, E. J. Poole-Connor's *Evangelicalism in England* (London: Henry Walter, 1966), esp. chap. 8.

<sup>11</sup>James Packer, “The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ: Some Evangelical Reflections,” *Churchman* 92 (1978): 102. The Packer essay had been delivered as an address the year previous in the annual Islington, London, Church of England pastoral conference. This writer heard Packer espousing identical statements to those quoted here: “A Personal Retrospective on the Conversation Between Evangelicals and Catholics,” delivered April 11, 2002, at the Wheaton College (Illinois) Theology Conference.



was then insisting that this expression of Christianity “had its origins in the later European Renaissance, especially in France, Germany, and Italy.” This perspective goes on being articulated at the present day by Gerald Bray.<sup>12</sup>

**A more recent view of evangelical origins.** Even so, in the last decades a distinguishable viewpoint has arisen, urging that whatever doctrinal continuities may be shown to exist between evangelical Christianity as it has been passed down to us today and older expressions of the faith, nevertheless something *new* happened within Protestant Christianity early in the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> On account of strong seventeenth-century differences of opinion as to whether a Protestant state should ally itself with a single expression of Protestantism and legislate favorably in support of that church (to the exclusion and disadvantage of those not persuaded about the terms on which religious comprehension was offered), rival forms of Protestantism began to inhabit a single territory. Thus, in addition to Catholic-Protestant division (traceable from the Reformation era forward) one now found both Protestants loyal to their state churches *and* Protestants committed to independent forms of Christianity within those same territories.

In England the rigid imposition of religious conformity after 1662 provoked the continuance of what has since been called “dissent” or “nonconformity.” After religious uniformity was legislated in 1662, non-Anglican Protestants (whether Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, or Quaker) had no guaranteed right to preach or to assemble for religious services until 1689. And in Scotland, the same Restoration period saw the resurgence of

<sup>12</sup>Alistair McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 26. McGrath had begun to elucidate this contention earlier (19-20), making explicit reference to movements among Italian Benedictines and aristocratic elites. See also Gerald Bray’s provocative essay, “Evangelicals: Are They the Real Catholics and Orthodox?,” in *Evangelicals and the Early Church*, ed. George Kalantzis and Andrew Tooley (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), chap. 9.

<sup>13</sup>The case for distinguishing between Protestantism pre- and post-1730 has nowhere been argued more persuasively than by David Bebbington in his *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989). An American edition followed in 1992 from Baker Books. The same disjunction between pre- and post-1730 is also maintained by Mark Noll in his *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003). Noll is quite ready, however, to discuss numerous “antecedents” of the age of Evangelicalism. See his second chapter. There is a similar readiness to acknowledge pre-1730 antecedents of Evangelicalism in *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 1-2.

an existing “Covenanter” movement on account of royal attempts to direct the governance of the national Church of Scotland (after 1662 made subject, as earlier in the century, to royally appointed bishops). In Scotland, the period up to 1690 saw an intensification of earlier persecution culminating in what came to be called “the Killing Times.”<sup>14</sup>

While reasoned cases were made in England and Scotland both on behalf of religious comprehension within a state church *and* of religious nonconformity extending beyond it, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the work of the gospel suffered materially through the repression of preachers and the harassing of congregations. The net effect of this Restoration period was the fragmentation of Protestantism and the polarizing of some preachers and congregations from others with which they were in considerable agreement about the gospel and godly living.

Now, according to this recent view, *Evangelicalism* (as distinct from the evangelical *faith*, which admittedly was older) unfolded in the period we now call the Great Awakening or Evangelical Revival (commencing circa 1730) as a transdenominational and cooperative movement emphasizing the proclamation of central gospel themes, the work of evangelism, and (in due course) world mission and the reform of society. This movement that emerged in western Europe, in the United Kingdom, and in North America in that era was one that promoted a higher degree of transdenominational collaboration than had ever prevailed earlier.

No one embodied this transdenominational impulse more than the Anglican evangelist George Whitefield (1714–1770), whose travels across the United Kingdom and the American colonies and his preaching in churches of various denominations (as well as out of doors) furnished sinews for this renaissance.<sup>15</sup> Whitefield, when called on by members of the Anglican clergy at Boston to defend his preaching in the pulpits of non-Anglican churches, his treating non-Anglican ministers as his equals, and his participating in Communion services with the same, gladly confessed himself guilty of all such practices.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>K. M. Brown, “Covenanters,” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 218-19.

<sup>15</sup>Mark Noll aptly describes Whitefield’s transcolonial role in his *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 91-95.

<sup>16</sup>Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 14.

And, in the nineteenth century, this transdenominational movement found expression in umbrella organizations like the first mission, Bible, and tract societies and the World Evangelical Alliance—many of which efforts still continue today.<sup>17</sup> Through such efforts (especially world mission), evangelical Christianity reproduced itself on continents remote from western Europe or North America.

While this view of an Evangelicalism only emerging in the eighteenth century does not deny demonstrable continuities of evangelical faith and action with the era preceding and of commonalities of devotion and piety between older Protestantism and the movements of the eighteenth century,<sup>18</sup> it has placed the greater emphasis on the things that distinguished the evangelical Christianity of the eighteenth century from the evangelical Protestant Christianity that preceded it.<sup>19</sup>

**Another view: modern Evangelicalism is essentially the fundamentalism of the twentieth century.** However, there is yet another perspective on this question. Diverging just as truly from the traditional view of evangelical Christianity's longevity is an outlook we can associate with the names of the late Ernest Sandeen, Richard Kyle, D. G. Hart, Michael Svigel, and Matthew Sutton.<sup>20</sup> Such writers have taken the view that evangelical Protestantism has undergone such radical transformation since the nineteenth century that it became something more sectarian, more anti-intellectual, and more belligerent than any conservative Protestantism that preceded it.

<sup>17</sup>The consolidation of evangelical efforts in such cooperative enterprises as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth and has been described in such works as R. H. Martin, *Evangelicals United* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1983); Charles Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790–1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960); and Ian Randall and David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2001).

<sup>18</sup>On this subject, consult Tom Schwanda, ed., *The Emergence of Evangelical Spirituality: The Age of Edwards, Newton, and Whitefield* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2015).

<sup>19</sup>The adequacy of this view of Evangelicalism's origin, introduced by Bebbington in 1989, has been assessed by Kenneth J. Stewart, "Did Evangelicalism Predate the Eighteenth Century?," *Evangelical Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (2005): 135–53, and in the essays gathered by Haykin and Stewart, *Emergence of Evangelicalism*. An American edition of this volume appeared under the title *The Advent of Evangelicalism* (Nashville: B&H, 2008).

<sup>20</sup>Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Richard Kyle, *Evangelicalism: An Americanized Christianity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1996); D. G. Hart, *Deconstructing Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); Michael Svigel, *Retro-Christianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2014).

On this view, so great were the modifications introduced in the period following 1860 that any discussion about how long evangelical Christianity has existed is deemed to be beside the point. Evangelical Christianity as we know it, according to such authors, is a fairly “oppositional” movement<sup>21</sup> with roots in the nineteenth century that entered into open conflict with other expressions of Christianity late in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth century.

Now, while there is some considerable basis for the view that deep and significant shifts took place within evangelical Christianity across the last century and a half, there is not (in my opinion) a sufficient basis for arguing that utter discontinuity exists between this expression of evangelical Christianity and what preceded it. Quite a wide swath of Protestantism used the term “evangelical” late in the nineteenth century; by the early twentieth century, this movement had settled into two stances. Some supporters went on to style their movement “liberal Evangelicalism,” while others were determined to employ the adjective “conservative.”<sup>22</sup> The terminology of “evangelical” and “Evangelicalism” was thus not purely the preserve of the conservative and belligerent.

Moreover, belligerent and anti-intellectual evangelical leaders could certainly be found across the nineteenth century as well as in the early twentieth.<sup>23</sup> Besides, it is generally agreed that an intentional reaction took place against this sectarian tendency in what is now known as the neo-evangelical era commencing around 1940. Those at the head of this movement were

<sup>21</sup>This useful descriptor originated with Martin Marty and is used by Alister McGrath in *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*, 30.

<sup>22</sup>In the North American context, this bifurcation is referenced in Matthew Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit: New York City and the Fate of Liberal Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). For the UK context, see David W. Bebbington and David Ceri Jones, eds., *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism in the United Kingdom During the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. chaps. 1 and 2. Liberal evangelicalism’s heyday is reflected in Vernon F. Storr, *Freedom and Tradition: A Study of Liberal Evangelicalism* (London: Nisbett & Co., 1940). A retrospective of the movement is provided in A. E. Smith, *Another Anglican Angle: Liberal Evangelicalism; The Anglican Evangelical Group Movement, 1917–1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>23</sup>An example of early nineteenth-century belligerence would be the London preacher Edward Irving (1792–1834). For a description of the rise of a belligerent evangelicalism in the Napoleonic era, see Ian S. Rennie, “Fundamentalism and the Varieties of North Atlantic Evangelicalism,” in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700–1900*, ed. Mark Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George Rawlyk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), chap. 16.

determined to reconnect with less-belligerent forms of evangelical Christianity in the nineteenth century and earlier.<sup>24</sup>

So, to return to our question, which “profile” of evangelical Christianity is it that our contemporaries have determined to abandon? I admit that they will not have thought about this in precisely these terms. Nevertheless, it is a question worth pressing on them and on others beginning to follow their paths. Is it the belligerent and pragmatism-oriented evangelical movement of the last century and a half that they would find it so easy to live without? Or will it be the “fusion” of older Protestantism with some appealing aspects of Enlightenment thought in the eighteenth century that they discard because it is lacking in antiquity and wedded to modernity? Perhaps they would have the greatest amount of difficulty in dismissing evangelical Christianity as reckoned by the still older view, which is that it transmits to us—by way of the Protestant Reformation—ideals and emphases traceable to the apostolic age and the New Testament. We will return to these important questions later.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you know an individual or individuals who have left evangelical Christianity for Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, or post-evangelical Christianity? Did that person explain their reasons for the change?
2. Do you agree with the suggestion that evangelical Christianity is currently facing an identity crisis? If you agree, what evidence or example would you point to in confirmation?
3. The author has proposed three contributing factors to the current identity crisis (distance from origin, lateral movement away from the original movements of protest, the thawing of Catholic-Protestant

<sup>24</sup>On this seminal period commencing around 1940, see Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); and Garth Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold Ockenga, Billy Graham and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). Developments of this period, portrayed from the Boston vantage point of Ockenga, have recently been provided by Owen Strachan, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

relations).<sup>25</sup> Does any one of these explanation prove more helpful to you than another? Does an additional explanation for the identity crisis come to mind?

4. In your opinion, which explanation of evangelical origins proves most convincing: that evangelical origins lie in earliest Christianity, that these origins lie in the eighteenth century, or that these origins lie in the more recent liberal-fundamentalist controversy of a century ago?

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<sup>25</sup>See these elaborated in the preface to this book.

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